

Hi my name is _____ and this is the 8th principle minute. With the adoption of the 8th Principle, our congregation committed to dismantle racism, beginning within our walls.

Just like last year's presidential election, there was a distinct pattern in the returns in the NJ gubernatorial election. Densely populated, often poor, urban areas where people of color are most likely to reside, were the last votes to be counted. Urban voting, especially in person, is a nightmare. In suburban areas, where voters often have jobs that give them flexibility in voting, there are rarely waits that can be measured in more than a few minutes. But in urban areas, where taking the time to vote often costs hourly workers lost wages, the waits can be measured in hours. In wealthy suburban counties, the voting machines always work. In poorer urban counties, the voting machines sometimes fail, requiring provisional ballots and lengthening the waits. Finally, the logistics of these densely populated areas with high vote counts results in long processing times. Voter suppression takes many forms. Whether it is more difficult to cast a ballot, or if that vote is counted last and its validity is called into question, the result is that some voters have more inherent power and others justifiably feel disenfranchised.

We need to take this lesson to heart when we examine how our congregation makes decisions. This is not to say that we deliberately exclude anyone or minimize their voices, but it is impact rather than intent that we must focus on. We will need to look at both the individual communities and the overall community of communities. Do we have mechanisms in place to ensure that all voices are equally heard? Are there obstacles, whether intentional or otherwise, to participation in decision making? How do we move from majority rule to consensus building. As we examine these questions, perhaps it's best to start with the assumption that there is inequity in decision making and that there are obstacles that may be invisible to everyone involved. If it proves otherwise, great, but until then, we must proceed as if there is work to be done.

Together we will continue this journey toward spiritual wholeness, build a beloved community, educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist. We will continue to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions.